



Commission on
H i s p a n i c A f f a i r s
2 0 0 3 A n n u a l R e p o r t

COMMISSIONERS

Leo Gaeta Commissioner Gaeta, recently re-elected as chair of the Commission, is the program manager for Columbia Basin Community Health. He lives in Othello and is a captain in the Washington Air National Guard.

Gabriel Banfi Commissioner Banfi served as the vice-chair of the Commission for the past year, and was also the chair of the Emergent Issues Committee. He is an attorney with the law office of Cespedes and Griffin in Bellevue and is also involved in the Eastside Latino Leadership Forum.

Mario Reyes Commissioner Reyes is an enforcement agent for the Washington State Liquor Control Board, and is a member of the Commission's Executive Committee. Incoming president of the North Central Washington Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, Commissioner Reyes lives in Wenatchee.

Becky Diaz Commissioner Diaz works for AT&T in Bellingham and is also heavily involved in the Whatcom Hispanic Organization. She is also a member of the Commission's Executive Committee.

Alice Castilleja-Lara Commissioner Castilleja-Lara works for Washington Credit Union League in Yakima, and is a long-time resident of the Yakima Valley. She is currently the longest-serving commissioner on the CHA.

Edward Davila Commissioner Davila is a physician at Burien Medical Care, and is a member of the Board of Grupo Mexico as well as one of the driving forces behind the establishment of a Latino Site Council for the Highline School District.

Diana Avalos Commissioner Avalos works for the Vancouver School District as a program director for the Migrant Education Program. She serves as the chair of Education Committee of the Commission.

Yvonne Lopez-Morton Commissioner Lopez-Morton is the Media Relations Manager at the Northwest Museum of Arts & Culture and is the current president of the Spokane Hispanic Business Professional Association. She is the incoming vice-chair for the Commission.

Gabriel Portugal Commissioner Portugal is a teacher in the Kennewick School District and is also the Committee Board President for the Tri-Cities "Cinco de Mayo" Committee.

Homero Tamez Commissioner Tamez is an MSW providing independent counseling and consulting services to residents of the Tri-Cities area. Alongside Commissioner Portugal, he is the newest member of the Commission.

LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

June 6, 2003

Dear Friends and Community Members,

RE: 2003 Commission on Hispanic Affairs Annual Report

The attached report compiles information and recommendations that address immediate and long-term needs of our Washington State Latino communities. The information gathered is based on input received at community public meetings held in communities throughout the state. Information received was by personal testimony of community members as well as calls received by our office. The members of the Commission on Hispanic Affairs have worked diligently to address the concerns identified by our Latino communities.

During the past year, we saw some successes as a result of Latino communities coming together to address issues affecting Latinos. A great example of this is the passage of HB 1079. Through the leadership and advocacy of Latinos throughout the state, we were able to see the doors open to higher education opportunities for future generations of Latino students. It was great to see community members working together statewide to educate one another on the benefits of the passage of HB 1079 and to organize a campaign to advocate and support this cause. Special recognition goes out to Ricardo Sanchez and Representative Phyllis Gutierrez-Kenney who successfully led this effort.

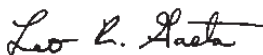
Nevertheless, our communities have been impacted greatly as a result of the State budget deficit. A year ago, many children lost their health care coverage due to changes in the Medicaid program that required coverage to non-resident children be transferred to the state's Basic Health Program. Approximately a third of the children lost complete coverage and the rest lost covered services for dental, vision, transportation, and interpreter services. This anti-immigrant trend continues, as services for prenatal care for non-resident women were proposed for elimination during budget negotiations in this past legislative session. The effort to cut unemployment insurance costs would essentially eliminate benefits to 34% of Latinos currently receiving benefits. It appears that the trend for fixing the budget and economic crisis in our State is to take away services from some of our most vulnerable community members. The Commission itself will feel this impact. Over the course of the last two years, the Commission has decreased its staffing level from 3.3 positions to now only having 1.8 staff positions allocated.

Unfortunately, the future outlook does not look much better than what we saw in this past legislative session. The struggle to bring about fairness and justice for Latinos in our State is an ongoing effort. I'd like to call on Latino leaders and communities to come together in a united and organized manner to bring about solutions that can mutually benefit all residents of Washington State. Your continued advocacy is key to ensuring that we preserve the progress that has been made in the past and assure a healthy future for Latino families residing in Washington State.

On behalf of the Commission on Hispanic Affairs, I would like to thank Governor Gary Locke for his ongoing support and attention to the various needs of the Latino communities. I would also like to especially thank Latino leaders and community advocates for their commitment and continued advocacy for and on behalf of Latinos in Washington. Your tireless efforts often go unrecognized but it is truly remarkable to see the fruits of your hard work. I'd also like to extend special recognition and thanks to each Commissioner and the Commission staff who teamed up and did a commendable job in gathering this information and preparing this report.

I am pleased to be able to provide you with the Commission's 2003 Annual Report. The Commission on Hispanic Affairs will continue to work hard to address issues and concerns affecting Latinos and looks forward to continued service to the Latino community and to the State of Washington. Should any questions arise regarding the contents of this report, please contact the Commission on Hispanic Affairs office or myself at your convenience.

Respectfully submitted,



Leo R. Gaeta, Chair
Washington Commission on Hispanic Affairs

DEMOGRAPHIC NOTES

Thirty-one percent of residents of Yakima County speak another language at home. Ninety percent of the residents of Mattawa are of Hispanic origin, and 90% speak a language other than English at home. Almost half of all residents of Adams and Franklin Counties are of Hispanic origin. (Census 2000)

One-quarter of all Latinos in Washington live in King County (Census 2000).

Forty percent of Washington state Latinos are under 18 years of age. (Census 2000)

In 1990, 7% of adults in Chelan County were of Hispanic origin. In 2000, the percentage of Latino adults rose to 15% of the total population. And according to the 2000 census, 30% of the children (18 and under) of Chelan County were of Hispanic origin.

Almost 100,000 Latin Americans moved to Washington in the last 10 years. (Census 2000)

Seventy percent of all Washington farm workers are of Hispanic origin. (Employment Security Department)

Latinos are now farming 625 farms totaling 130,500 acres, up from 378 farms totaling 87,000 acres 10 years ago. (Seattle Post-Intelligencer, May 14, 2002).

In 1998, 7.2% of state expenditures went to minority and women owned businesses (\$122,849,917). Initiative 200 was passed in November of that year. By 2002, only 1.5% of state expenditures went to MWBEs (\$29,574,009). (Office of Women and Minority Business Enterprises)

As of 1997, there were over 10,000 Hispanic-owned firms in Washington, with sales and receipts totaling over \$1,711,293,000. More than half of these firms were either in the service or retail industries. (1997 Economic Census)

As of 2001, there were 1,088 Latino students in the Granger School District (82% of total school population), but only 10 Latino teachers (14% of all teachers). (Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction)

In Miami-Dade County, Florida, one out of five Latinos has at least graduated from college. In Washington State, one out of ten Latinos has at least graduated from college. In Mason County, only one out of 20 Latinos has graduated from college. (Census 2000)



2003 LEGISLATIVE RECAP

For the Latino community of Washington State, this year's legislative session required a defensive posture for most of the 105 days, but was capped with a joyous success. The Commission spent a significant amount of time advising against policies that would harm our undocumented brothers and sisters who work in our state. The Senate attempted to eliminate undocumented children from coverage by the Basic Health Plan, leaving thousands of children without health coverage. Senators also attempted to make undocumented residents ineligible for drivers' licenses, which would have made our roads more dangerous and would have made more difficult the lives of many farmworkers who must drive to work to feed, clothe and shelter our families. The Senate also proposed to eliminate prenatal care for expectant undocumented mothers, but due to strong opposition from Governor Locke and the Latino community, such critical health care was spared.

Hispanic residents and citizens also faced being detrimentally affected by legislative proposals. A bill that thankfully did not succeed attempted to remove citizens with drivers' licenses (but not registered to vote) from the jury duty pool. Statistics clearly show that Latinos register to vote at a lower rate than non-Latinos due to a number of barriers. The result of this measure would have disproportionately removed Latinos from the jury duty pool, making it more difficult for a defendant to be represented by a jury of peers. Another bill would have significantly lowered the housing standards for sheepherders, all of whom were Peruvian or Chilean immigrants.

A disappointing failure in this last legislative session was an effort to provide conditional loan repayment to college graduates who promised to teach in Washington in a high-need area. The Commission has long been concerned with the lack of qualified bilingual and ESL instructors in our state. If our Latino college graduates were given the opportunity to repay their school loans by promising to work as bilingual teachers, our younger students would be able to prosper at a much greater rate than today.

Bills that would have benefited the Latino community but did not make it through the session included a bill that criminalized the trafficking of persons, an odious practice that preys on low-income Latin Americans brought to the US. Another bill that failed was an effort to make small claims court more accessible and a more viable option for aggrieved parties. Small claims court is an avenue to justice often unused by Latinos who have not been paid their proper wages, and this proposal would give a prevailing party more power to collect a judgment.

The joy from this year's session came May 7th, when Governor Locke signed into law House Bill 1079. This law will give students who have not yet adjusted their immigration status the opportunity to pay in-state tuition at our colleges and universities. HB 1079 recognizes that these students are and will be Washingtonians, and opens the door to higher education that had been closed in the past. The Commission commends Representative Phyllis Gutierrez Kenney, who sponsored and championed the bill, and also Ricardo Sanchez, a stalwart advocate for Latino students and a unifying voice in support of this legislation.

In addition to HB 1079, the Commission also advised in favor of a measure that would initiate blood monitoring for farm workers exposed to neurotoxic pesticides, and the Commission also supported a successful bill that will regulate money transmitters, protecting the thousands of Latino immigrants who regularly send money home.

The session ended with a difficult fight over the reform of the unemployment insurance (UI) program. In the waning days of the legislative session, business interests proposed a reform of UI that would have immediately made ineligible one-quarter of all seasonal farmworkers and 18% of all Latinos. The specific provision that concerned the Commission was one targeting seasonal workers for ineligibility (by requiring these workers to work over the whole year, specifically for twice the number of hours that they worked during their high work quarter). The Commission advised the Legislature to have this provision eliminated, and with Governor Locke's support that provision was eliminated, saving UI eligibility for thousands of workers. A modified reform was passed, which cut benefits across the board for most low-wage workers, but the effect on Latinos was much less disproportional than the original proposal.

Overall, many of the most detrimental proposals to the Hispanic community did not become law, and the proposal that brought together all of the Latino community, HB 1079, became law. The 2003 legislative session can be considered a success for the community, but it comes with a serious undertone. Latinos, especially farm workers, low-wage workers, and the undocumented, continue to be amongst the easiest targets for legislators looking to save money in a time of a large state deficit. Without attention and without unity, these attempts will continue to be proposed and may even succeed in the future. Unity continues to be the Latino community's most important goal, and its most important strength.

EDUCATION

The demographic landscape for the Latino population in Washington State and in the United States is changing rapidly. Between 1999-2000, the Washington State Latino population grew 106% and is expected to mirror this growth rate within the next decade. Our educational system must respond and prepare accordingly to this rate of growth and need. The Commission continues to be concerned with the low performance of Latino students in the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) in addition to high Latino dropout rates. These factors perpetuate a vicious cycle of undereducated students and families further damaged by low expectations from society, reinforced poverty, racism and isolation. Education serves as a vehicle for the Latino community in Washington State to becoming a skilled workforce, improving chances of homeownership, and bettering access to healthcare and social justice.

Parental Involvement/Family Advocacy

Through much of its statewide contacts with the Latino community statewide, the Commission has identified an appeal from Latino parents desiring to be recognized as inclusive and participatory in their children's education.

Emerging research affirms that parental involvement and family advocacy increase student achievement and success, consequently reducing behavioral challenges and dropout rates. We encourage all educational institutions to begin consistent and honest discussions that recognize and identify obstacles which discourage parental involvement. To begin this process, educational institutions must be open to and aware of Hispanic socio-cultural values and traditions. Involved Latino families cite an institutional bias in their child's educational environment as well as an insistence for acceptance of inflexible traditional definitions and strategies.

The CHA makes the following recommendations:

- that OSPI or local school districts formulate a parental involvement scorecard, using as a template the standards for parental involvement drafted by the National PTA;
- teachers should hold monthly discussions with parents and students to outline understood academic expectations and goals;
- school districts should provide translated and accessible Essential Academic Learning Requirements (EALRs) information to parents to foster learning at home;
- school districts should translate all informational guidelines and reforms including discipline policies;
- schools should create a central phone bank and or website announcing and describing all school and community activities;

- schools should support teachers by providing training with a focus on cultural sensitivity and extended family dynamics;
- continued financial support for Adult Family Literacy programs;
- schools should encourage PTAs to develop site councils that assure equal representation to parents in all school decision-making policies and practices.

Dropout Prevention

Statistics regarding Hispanic students in Washington are alarming: Washington State Hispanic students have the second lowest graduation rate at 58.2%. Only 47% of all Hispanic students in Washington from the class of 2001 have graduated from high school. Untenable gaps still exist between Hispanic students and their counterparts in the areas of high school and college completion. Several reasons have been identified as causing these increased numbers, including specific educational processes as well as lack of responsiveness by state and local educational agencies.

In attempting to reduce the number of Hispanic dropouts in Washington state, the Commission supports:

- the elimination of barriers and constraints in all state agencies, school districts, and higher education institutions that may contribute to the Hispanic student dropout rate;
- dedicating state funds for potential dropout reduction strategies;
- research on the causes of dropout rates in the Hispanic community;
- the A+ Commission's recommendation to identify school districts where dropout rates have decreased over time so as to identify possible best practices;
- integrating strategies from state agencies, school districts and higher education institutions for dropout prevention; and
- aggressively recruiting bilingual and bicultural students into teaching career programs by providing financial support such as debt forgiveness.

Success in Higher Education

Latinos have become the nation's largest minority; their level of education will strongly affect the quality of our nation's future labor force. Education, specifically higher education, is key to rising out of poverty. Studies show that in the first year after finishing a two-year education or training program, an individual's income increases by an average of

23%. Individuals who complete a four-year degree earn \$16,000 more per year than they would have with only a high school diploma. The Commission supports efforts to give low-income families the tools they need to work their way out of poverty. To understand enrollment, retention, and graduation numbers, the Commission supports further research into Latino participation in higher education in our state.

Many people often assume that contemporary immigrants pose a burden on the economy and decrease opportunities in the labor market. In reality, immigrants create new jobs

and income streams by establishing new businesses, paying taxes, and increasing labor productivity. As the Washington State Latino population continues to grow, so does the need for the state to improve its access to higher education for all of its residents.

Today, the economy of Washington State and the nation is in transition. Most notably, future labor markets will demand better-educated workers. If Latinos are to enjoy the benefits of successful economic participation, Latinos must participate fully and successfully in higher education.

EMERGENT ISSUES

Racial Profiling

Throughout our travels within Washington state, the Commission on Hispanic Affairs time and time again has heard testimony from residents who have been victimized by the practice of racial profiling. The majority of these incidents are related to traffic stops by law enforcement.

According to data collected by the Washington State Patrol, law enforcement officers have documented not only data related to officer stops, but also data related to citations given and searches conducted. The Commission is concerned with some of the results related not only to traffic stops, but also to searches administered after a stop. The results seem to indicate that individuals of Hispanic origin are disproportionately searched after a traffic stop.

The Commission believes that it is imperative that the practice of racial profiling (as well as profiling on the basis of ethnicity or national origin) stop. This can be done through documentation, data, and education. The Commission applauds efforts by the Washington State Patrol to document data on traffic stops and searches.

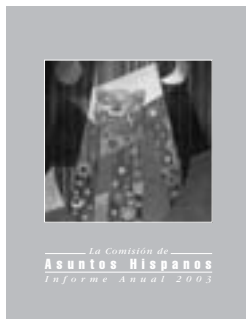
Health Care

Access to adequate and affordable health care for Latinos in our state continues to become more difficult in this time of economic downturn and a \$2.7 billion dollar state deficit. At the end of last year's legislative session, more than 20,000 undocumented and recently-arrived Latino immigrants were made ineligible for the state-funded Medical Assistance (MA) program. These immigrants were given the option to apply for the Basic Health Plan (BHP), which provides less coverage and requires the payment of premium and co-pays. The transfer was not automatic, and enrollment by this

population into Basic Health never topped 55%. Latinos who did transfer are in fact steadily dropping off the program, going from a high of 16,135 transferees to 11,453. The Commission believes that efforts by the state to educate those Latinos made ineligible for state-funded MA (and to educate the parents of the many children made ineligible) about the importance and benefits of transferring to BHP were insufficient, as evidenced by the large number of people who did not enroll in Basic Health.

After the 2003 legislative session, the coverage provided by Basic Health to low-income Latinos in our state is even further threatened. Plans to expand the number of slots available for coverage in BH have turned quickly into proposals of reduction. The 2003-05 biennial budget signed by Governor Locke reduces the number of slots for BH coverage to 100,000. Currently, 118,000 people are enrolled in Basic Health, with a goal to reduce the slots as enrollees drop off. Fortunately, immigrant children are still currently permitted to enroll for BH coverage.

Nationally, Latinos are two to three times more likely to be underinsured or uninsured compared to non-Latinos. The Commission seeks to highlight the crisis of health care coverage for our Latino community and hopes to promote methods to increase and improve health care coverage for the Hispanic population. In the 2003-05 operating budget, the Legislature appropriated \$6 million to the state's Health Care Authority to provide dental coverage and interpreter services to those immigrants ineligible for medical assistance. The Commission expresses its desire that this money be spent efficiently, appropriately, and according to the priority needs of the community.



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Additional material for this report was provided by Phyllis Gallegos and Christina Guillen-Cook, both of whom served the Commission on Hispanic Affairs dutifully as commissioners during 2002, and Brendan von Briesen, legislative liaison during the 2003 legislative session.